

Vanuatu to host inaugural Asia Pacific regional Internet Governance Forum

By Fen Napwai

VANUATU WILL HOST THE FIRST ever Asia Pacific regional Internet Governance Forum (APriGF) on August 13-16 at the Iritiki Island Resort.

The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), together with the office of the Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulator (TRR) have announced the upcoming APriGF in a press conference yesterday.

Chief Information Officer of OGCIO, Gerard Metsan told the media present that this successful bid on behalf of the Vanuatu government was made in 2015 and the Council of Ministers (COM) has approved for the Vanuatu to host this event.

"This is a very important forum that covers safe practices of internet in the society and in the cyberspace," he said.

"The theme for this year is 'Empowering Communities Asia Pacific-Build an affordable, inclusive, open and secure internet'.

"The COM has approved an amount of V121 million for this historical event to cater for almost 300 participants, so far we have registered 140 participants and prominent names within the internet space will also be present."

Acting Chairman of the Local Organizing Committee of the APriGF, John Jack reiterated that this is a regional event bringing together internet stakeholders.

"This is the first time for Vanuatu to host the APriGF and it is the first country in the Pacific so we are proud to be hosting the event," he said.

"We are in preparation for the forthcoming event, as it

is a regional meeting with importance to assessment and development of internet, we are inviting all technical people and communities to be part of the forum-we welcome the participation of everyone interested in internet governance."

Jack briefed the media with an insight into the content of the forum and the impact of its annual get together.

"There are several reasons why Vanuatu is hosting the APriGF. We now have the submarine cable connection, we have the biggest government network in the region and the commitment of the government in ICT and the liberation of ICT in the country," he said.

"The success of this event will depend entirely on our effort and the support of everyone."

Jack admitted that there are challenges of capacity to be able to organize the forum, limited resource and it's not easy but the governance of connectivity will be more challenging in the days to come thus Vanuatu's hosting and participation in this forum is vital.

"We have confirmation of participation from big names in internet namely Facebook, Google and the founding father of internet, IT Ministers in the region have shown interest to attend the forum and there is a fellowship for local participants that will be fully sponsored by the government to attend," he said.

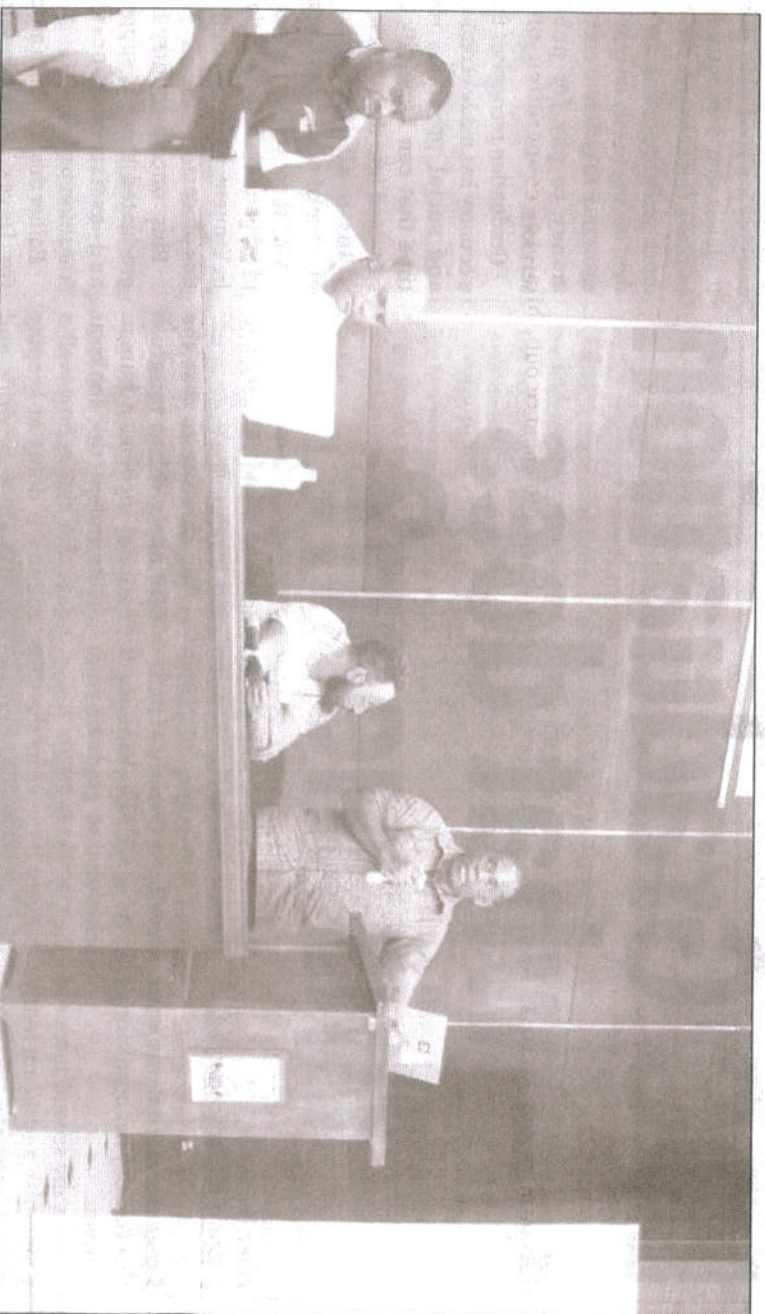
"We have an online registration for anyone interested to attend and we also have a Youth Internet Governance Forum that will run parallel to the APriGF so a number of 60 youth expected and senior high school students

are encouraged to participate- this is Multi stakeholder approach where everyone involved in ICT attend and participate especially during the first day of the forum that will be localized, will be open to the public."

Jack explained that for public wishing to attend the event, banana boats will be used at that time to ferry people across to Iritiki.

"We also have a registration for speakers as we need speakers to be in the forum, for instance a local expert in disaster or in health can register as a speaker and we can insert the presentation into ICT context, so any confident speaker out there can register in our online registration," he said.

The Co-founder of Garden Code, Cainton Milroy and his team were tasked to create a website for the APriGF within a time frame of two weeks and the website is now up and



John Jack, Vice Chairman of the APriGF LoC (standing) and the LoC team at the press conference.

running. It can now be viewed for registration and program outline for the forum.

"This website features the domain '.vu' and it is very important that we own this because this is within

the jurisdiction of Vanuatu and i applaud the TRR for championing this cause to make sure every internet providers and users use this domain," he said.

"This event is vital for ICT in the country and it will trigger future innovations." Anyone who is interested to register and be part of the fellowship or as a speaker can visit the APriGF link on: aprigf.vu